



Opportunities And Job Satisfaction of Filipino Seafarers: Inputs to An Enhanced Welfare Program

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive-correlational research study was conducted to determine the influence of opportunities to the job satisfaction of seafarers. The respondents of the study were 93 seafarers chosen using convenience sampling. A researcher-made questionnaire which has undergone validity and reliability testing was used to gather the data. Data gathered was analyzed using percentage, means, standard deviation, and Spearman rho. Results showed that seafarers considered travel, ongoing training and skills development, and medical benefits as very high opportunities. Moreover, seafarers are satisfied with their work. They find fulfillment in their jobs regardless of their age, rank, job department, and years of sea service. Significant relationships existed between developing strong character, higher wages, better benefits, medical benefits, travel opportunities, adventure, opportunities for quick advancement, and working with a diverse range of people with job satisfaction. It can be concluded that by ensuring competitive compensation, investing in personal development opportunities, and fostering a diverse and inclusive environment, seafarers will be empowered to navigate their careers with greater fulfillment. An enhanced welfare program for seafarers as the output of this is recommended to help them widen their opportunities and further enhance their job satisfaction.

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1. Background of the Study.

It is widely accepted that seafarers are the backbone of any maritime nation as their experience and expertise are a requirement for many functions performed ashore, where they play an important role in maritime administration, planning and policy-making, as well as in areas such as ports management, maritime safety and marine surveying. The Philippines is one of the leading sources of seafarers in the world. At any given time, there are at least 400,000 Filipinos working on board ocean-going vessels including bulk carriers, cargo, tankers, and passenger vessels which are mainly cruise ships. According to the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), the Philippines is the world's main supplier of sea-based workers since 1987, making the country the manning capital of the world.

Around 229,000 Filipino workers are on board merchant shipping vessels around the world at any given time. Overall, Filipino sea-based workers comprised more than 25 percent of 1.5 million mariners worldwide, thus becoming the single biggest nationality bloc in the shipping industry (Eye on Asia, 2022).

Filipino seafarers are the backbone of the global maritime industry. With over 489,000 Filipino sailors working on ships all over the world in 2022, these workers keep the world's supply chains moving and ensuring the safety of both ship passengers and cargo (Paunan, 2023).

The index's measure of overall happiness decreased from 6.41 to 5.85 in the first quarter of 2022 with levels dropping across all categories. Seafarers reported dissatisfaction with working conditions, wages, living conditions and specifically food and the ability to remain fit onboard, training, ability to remain in contact with family ashore, and access to shore leave and the availability of welfare facilities on shore (The Maritime Executive, 2022).

As a seafarer, the researcher would like to determine the

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opportunities and job satisfaction of Filipino seafarers onboard, thus this research was conducted.

1.1. Statement of the Problem.

This study was conducted to examine the opportunities, and job satisfaction of Filipino seafarers.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the opportunities of Filipino seafarers onboard ship as a whole and when grouped according to age, rank, job department and years of sea service?
2. What is the level of job satisfaction of Filipino seafarers as a whole and when grouped according to age, rank, job department and years of sea service?
3. Is there a significant relationship between opportunities and job satisfaction of seafarers?

1.2. Hypotheses.

In view of the preceding problems, the following hypotheses were considered:

1. There is no significant relationship between seafarers' opportunities and job satisfaction.

2. Theoretical Framework.

Job satisfaction can be explained using equity theory. According to Adams and Freedman (1976), equity theory refers to balancing or calibrating the inputs and outputs of an employee. The inputs are a composite of time, effort, ability, and loyalty which an employee commits to his (both genders) work. In exchange, the employee receives intrinsic and extrinsic rewards in the form of pay, bonuses, benefits, security, and enjoyment. Adams and Freedman (1976) posited that individuals become demotivated or unsatisfied when their inputs are not fairly compensated as compared to someone who is performing a comparable job.

3. Conceptual Framework.

This study focuses on the opportunities and risks encountered by seafarers and their job satisfaction. Opportunities serve as independent variables. Job satisfaction is the dependent variable.

4. Review of Related Literature.

4.1. Opportunities.

Being a seafarer enables one to see the world and experience new things. This point is an enormous benefit. Second, seafaring is also often connected to wealth, because of trade. Third, there is a sense of adventure with seafaring that is appealing (Short-Fact, 2019).

A Filipino seafarer plying international routes are enjoying some perks and benefits that normal workers ashore don't have. These are some of the ways that the government and shipowners

lure young men and women into joining the profession. Being at sea and work on ships is never an easy task. It will never be. But there are still plenty of young adults around the world that bear with the difficulties and become one of us. These are the perks and benefits of being a seafarer according to Merchantsealife.com (2021) includes taxfree, can travel to different places around the world, above median salary, developing a strong character and medically fit.

4.2. Job Satisfaction.

Job satisfaction is a measure of an employee's contentment with their job, the feeling of enjoyment or fulfillment that a person derives from their job. It is measured in behavioral, cognitive and affective components. Job satisfaction can be separated into two ideas: intrinsic job satisfaction and extrinsic job satisfaction. Intrinsic job satisfaction focuses on what kind of work is being done, the tasks and duties that make up the job. Extrinsic job satisfaction focuses on work conditions, such as the environment, supervisor, pay and coworkers.

The results of the study of Yuen, et. al (2018) showed that job satisfaction is considerably correlated with the job performance of seafarers. In addition, the amount of stress associated with working onboard a ship and the attractiveness of rewards are key determinants of job satisfaction. The dispositions of seafarers and appeal of the job design also have considerable impacts on job satisfaction.

Studies consistently identify fair wages, overtime pay, and comprehensive benefits packages as significant drivers of job satisfaction (Carotenuto et al., 2012; Kim & Jang, 2016). Adequate financial compensation coupled with health insurance, leave allowances, and retirement plans contribute to seafarer well-being and positive work attitudes. and retirement plans contribute to seafarer well-being and positive work attitudes. Wage satisfaction consistently emerges as a key predictor of job satisfaction (Sulaiman et al., 2020).

The study by Lee et al. (2017) that examined the factors affecting job satisfaction among Korean seafarers. The study found that the unique aspects of seafaring, including travel opportunities and exposure to diverse cultures, were positively correlated with job satisfaction. The study by Kaur et al. (2015) identified several key factors impacting the job satisfaction of Indian seafarers such as compensation and benefits, work environment, career development, job security, personality factors.

5. Methodology.

5.1. Research Design.

This study utilized the descriptive-correlational research method. Descriptive research is collecting information from a group of people to describe some aspects or characteristics of the population of which that group is a part (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2012). The study used the correlation research method to determine the relationship's direction and extent between the population variables under study (Ardales, 1992). It establishes the relationship between two or more variables without any attempt to influence them.

5.2. Respondents.

The respondents of the study were 93 seafarers for the Year 2023 regardless of their employment status (on board or on vacation).

5.3. Sample size and Sampling Technique.

Convenience sampling was utilized in selecting the respondents of the study. Locating and contacting seafarers can be difficult due to their global mobility and often limited internet access. Convenience sampling allowed the researcher to reach a target population quickly and without significant logistical challenges.

5.4. Research Instrument.

A researcher-made instrument was utilized to gather the data. It was divided into four parts. Part I was utilized to profile the respondents. Part II determined the opportunities of being a seafarer. Part III measured seafarer’s job satisfaction. The instrument has undergone face and content validation. To establish the reliability of the instrument, it was pilot tested and Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability coefficient. The reliability coefficient of .905 indicated that the questionnaire was reliable.

The responses were summed up and the mean scores will be computed. The following scale of means and their description was utilized to determine the opportunities of the respondents:

Means of Scale	Descriptive
3.25–4.00	Very High
2.50–3.24	High
1.75–2.49	Low
1.00–1.74	Very Low

The following scale of means and their description was utilized to determine the job satisfaction of the respondents:

Means of Scale	Descriptive
3.25 – 4.00	Very Satisfied
2.50 – 3.24	Satisfied
1.75 – 2.49	Dissatisfied
1.00 – 1.74	Very Dissatisfied

5.5. Data Gathering Procedure.

Upon securing permission, the questionnaire was distributed electronically through Google Forms. Respondents were provided with a comprehensive overview of the study’s nature, aims, and potential benefits. Collected data was systematically tallied, recorded, and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools.

5.6. Data Analysis Procedure.

The data gathered from the respondents were analyzed with the use of appropriate statistical tools. Frequency counts or Percentages were used to determine the profile of the respondents as to age, rank, job department, and length of sea service. Mean was utilized to determine opportunities, and job satisfaction of seafarers. Standard deviation was employed to determine the deviation of the scores from the mean. Spearman rho was employed to determine the significant relationship between opportunities, and job satisfaction of seafarers.

6. Results and Discussions.

6.1. Opportunities of Seafarers.

The results of the study revealed that respondents considered travel opportunities (M = 3.31, SD = .625), ongoing training and skills development (M = 3.28, SD = .682), and medical benefits (M = 3.25, SD = .732) as very high opportunities. High opportunities include working with a diverse range of people, developing strong character, opportunities for quick advancement, higher starting wages, and better benefits. Travel opportunities, ongoing training and skills development, and comprehensive medical benefits were found to be the most valued opportunities by seafarers. This highlights their desire for personal growth, exploration, and security in their careers. Other "high" opportunities like career advancement, strong character development, higher wages, and good benefits remain significant, indicating a balance between personal growth and financial stability concerns. The results were presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Opportunities of Seafarers as a Whole.

Opportunities	Mean	SD	Description
1. Higher Starting Wages	3.13	.711	High
2. Better Benefits	3.12	.845	High
3. Opportunities for Quick Advancement	3.15	.722	High
4. Work with a diverse range of people	3.23	.573	High
5. Travel Opportunities	3.31	.625	Very high
6. Adventure	3.13	.663	High
7. Medical Benefits	3.25	.732	Very high
8. Ongoing Training and Skills Development	3.28	.682	Very high
9. Developing Strong Character	3.20	.501	High
Legend:	3.25 – 4.00 Very High; 2.50 – 3.24 High; 1.75 – 2.49 Low; 1.00 – 1.74 Very Low		

Source: Authors.

The results indicated that younger seafarers considered ongoing training and skills development (M = 3.29), and travel opportunities (M = 3.26) as their highest opportunities. Travel opportunities (M = 3.59), and working with a diverse range of people (M = 3.48) were the top priorities of the older seafarers.

Younger seafarers prioritize opportunities that enhance their knowledge and expertise, indicating a desire for career advancement and future marketability. This suggests companies should highlight their skill development programs and training initiatives to attract younger talent.

For older seafarers, travel seems to hold different value, potentially offering a break from routine and a chance to connect with different cultures. Working with diverse crews may also satisfy their desire for social interaction and cultural exchange. The data were presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Opportunities of Seafarers when Grouped According to Age.

Opportunities	Mean	Description Younger	Mean	Description Older
1. Higher Wages	2.94	High	3.34	Very high
2. Better Benefits	2.84	High	3.43	Very high
3. Opportunities for Quick Advancement	2.90	High	3.43	Very high
4. Work with a diverse range of people	3.00	High	3.48	Very high
5. Travel Opportunities	3.26	Very high	3.59	Very high
6. Adventure	2.98	High	3.23	High
7. Medical Benefits	3.22	High	3.27	Very high
8. Ongoing Training and Skills Development	3.29	Very high	3.21	High
9. Developing Strong Character	3.04	High	3.19	High

Legend: 3.25 – 4.00 Very High; 2.50 – 3.24 High; 1.75 – 2.49 Low; 1.00 – 1.74 Very Low

Source: Authors.

When grouped according to rank, ratings valued medical benefits most (M = 3.33), while officers prioritized travel opportunities (M = 3.33). Ongoing training and skills development was considered also as a valuable opportunity of both ratings (M = 3.30) and officers (M= 3.25). The results were shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Opportunities of Seafarers when Grouped According to Rank.

Opportunities	Mean	Description Rating	Mean	Description Officer
1. Higher Wages	3.11	High	3.15	High
2. Better Benefits	3.08	High	3.18	High
3. Opportunities for Quick Advancement	3.13	High	3.18	High
4. Work with a diverse range of people	3.17	High	3.30	Very high
5. Travel Opportunities	3.30	Very high	3.33	Very high
6. Adventure	3.11	High	3.15	High
7. Medical Benefits	3.33	Very high	3.18	High
8. Ongoing Training and Skills Development	3.30	Very high	3.25	Very high
9. Developing Strong Character	3.23	High	3.18	High

Legend: 3.25 – 4.00 Very High; 2.50 – 3.24 High; 1.75 – 2.49 Low; 1.00 – 1.74 Very Low

Source: Authors.

The findings of the study as shown in Table 4 revealed that deck personnel strongly valued travel opportunities (M = 3.36), while engine department seafarers prioritized working with a diverse range of people (M = 3.35).

Table 4: Opportunities of Seafarers when Grouped According to Job Department.

Opportunities	Mean	Description Deck	Mean	Description Engine
1. Higher Wages	3.07	High	3.27	Very high
2. Better Benefits	3.12	High	3.12	High
3. Opportunities for Quick Advancement	3.09	High	3.31	Very high
4. Work with a diverse range of people	3.18	High	3.35	Very high
5. Travel Opportunities	3.36	Very high	3.19	High
6. Adventure	3.16	High	3.04	High
7. Medical Benefits	3.31	Very high	3.08	High
8. Ongoing Training and Skills Development	3.25	Very high	3.34	Very high
9. Developing Strong Character	3.16	High	3.31	Very high

Legend: 3.25 – 4.00 Very High; 2.50 – 3.24 High; 1.75 – 2.49 Low; 1.00 – 1.74 Very Low

Source: Authors.

Table 5 showed that seafarers with less than 5 years of sea service highly valued medical benefits (M= 3.50) while those with 5-10 years placed greater emphasis on ongoing training and skills development (M= 3.75). Developing strong character

(M= 3.26) topped the list for those with 11-20 years while those with above 20 years of sea service were most attracted to travel opportunities (M = 3.47).

Table 5: Opportunities of Seafarers when Grouped According to Years of Sea Service.

Opportunities	M	D	M	D	M	D	M	D
	Less than 5 years		5 -10 years		11-20 years		Above 20 years	
1. Higher Wages	3.25	VH	3.25	VH	3.00	H	3.20	H
2. Better Benefits	3.00	H	3.06	H	3.00	H	3.33	VH
3. Opportunities for Quick Advancement	2.50	H	3.24	H	2.95	H	3.40	VH
4. Work with a diverse range of people	3.00	H	3.50	VH	3.15	H	3.23	H
5. Travel Opportunities	3.63	VH	3.31	VH	3.13	H	3.47	VH
6. Adventure	3.25	VH	3.25	VH	3.00	H	3.20	H
7. Medical Benefits	3.50	VH	3.44	VH	3.15	H	3.20	H
8. Ongoing Training and Skills Development	3.00	H	3.75	VH	3.18	H	3.23	H
9. Developing Strong Character	3.13	H	3.31	VH	3.26	VH	3.10	H

Legend: 3.25 – 4.00 Very High (VH); 2.50 – 3.24 High (H); 1.75 – 2.49 Low (L); 1.00 – 1.74 Very Low (VL)

Source: Authors.

6.2. Job Satisfaction of Seafarers.

The findings of the study revealed that seafarers as a whole are satisfied with their job (M = 2.58, SD = .464). They are satisfied with their career development and advancement (M = 2.77, SD = .459), quality of life and social interaction (M = 2.76, SD = .570), and compensation and benefits (M = 2.50, SD = .715). Seafarers expressed dissatisfaction with their workload and working conditions (M = 2.44, SD = .550).

Seafarers seem to appreciate opportunities for skill development and career progression, which can provide a sense of purpose and motivation. This suggests investments in training and promotion pathways should be prioritized to maintain job satisfaction.

The study indicates that aspects like onboard amenities, recreational activities, and even the close-knit community formed at sea contribute to overall satisfaction. Enhancing these aspects can further improve the appeal of the seafaring profession.

The study further suggests that the workload structure and the physical and environmental challenges of seafaring, such as harsh weather, isolation, and limited space, contribute to dissatisfaction. Improving onboard facilities, offering support for managing isolation, and ensuring adherence to safety regulations are crucial areas of focus. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Job Satisfaction of Seafarers as a Whole.

Job Satisfaction	Mean	SD	Description
1. Compensation and Benefits	2.50	.715	Satisfied
2. Workload and Working Conditions	2.44	.550	Dissatisfied
3. Quality of Life and Social Interaction	2.76	.570	Satisfied
4. Career Development and Advancement	2.77	.459	Satisfied
Over-all	2.58	.464	Satisfied

Legend: 3.25 – 4.00 Very Satisfied; 2.50 – 3.24 Satisfied; 1.75 – 2.49 Dissatisfied; 1.00 – 1.74 Very Dissatisfied

Source: Authors.

Based on the findings of the study, seafarers are satisfied in their job regardless of their age, rank, job department and years

of sea service. Both younger (M = 2.60, SD = .445) and older (M = 2.56, SD = .489) crews reported overall job satisfaction. Ratings (M = 2.61, SD = .481) and officers (M = 2.54, SD = .444) expressed satisfaction with their seafaring jobs. Deck (M= 2.56, SD = .461) and engine (M = 2.62, SD = .480) personnel considered their job as seafarer satisfying. In terms of years of sea service, all groups (M = 2.97, SD = .084; M = 2.54, SD = .190; M = 2.65, SD = .518; M = 2.51, SD = .479) find their jobs as seafarers satisfying.

Seafarers across age groups and years of experience find their jobs satisfying. Ratings and officers, deck, and engine personnel find fulfillment in different aspects of their work.

Table 7: Job Satisfaction of Seafarers when Grouped According to Age, Rank, Job Type and Years of Sea Service.

Category	Mean	SD	Description
Age			
Younger	2.60	.445	Satisfied
Older	2.56	.489	Satisfied
Rank			
Ratings	2.61	.481	Satisfied
Officer	2.54	.444	Satisfied
Job Department			
Deck	2.56	.461	Satisfied
Engine	2.62	.480	Satisfied
Years of Sea Service			
Less than 5 years	2.97	.084	Satisfied
5 - 10 years	2.54	.190	Satisfied
11 – 20 years	2.65	.518	Satisfied
Above 20 years	2.51	.479	Satisfied

Legend: 3.25 – 4.00 Very Satisfied; 2.50 – 3.24 Satisfied; 1.75 – 2.49 Dissatisfied; 1.00 – 1.74 Very Dissatisfied

Source: Authors.

6.3. Relationship Between Seafarers’ Opportunities and Job Satisfaction.

Spearman rho test results revealed that developing strong character (r = .497, p = .000) higher wages (r = .428, p = .000), better benefits (r = .400, p =.000), medical benefits (r = .339, p = .001), travel opportunities (r = .339, p = .001), adventure (r = .317, p = .002), opportunities for quick advancement (r = .274, p = .008), and working with a diverse range of people (r = .252, p = .015)have significant relationships with job satisfaction. However, no significant relationship was noted between ongoing training and skills development (r = .183, p = .080) and job satisfaction.

This suggests that fostering personal growth and resilience might contribute to a more fulfilling experience at sea. Financial security and seafarers’ access to healthcare directly impact well-being and satisfaction. Traveling the world and encountering new experiences and adventures provides seafarers with excitement, and a sense of accomplishment, contributing to enjoyment and fulfillment in seafaring. Moreover, the potential for career advancement motivates and provides seafarers with a sense of achievement, positively impacting their satisfaction. Interaction with colleagues from various backgrounds can enrich their work experience and foster a sense of community, leading to higher job satisfaction.

The lack of a statistically significant relationship between training and job satisfaction implies that the training programs

might not be addressing the seafarers’ specific needs and skill gaps related to their current roles or career aspirations.

The findings were supported by the studies by Sulaiman et al. (2020) and Lee et al. (2017) who found that personal growth, resilience, and adaptability are positively correlated with seafarer job satisfaction. Wage satisfaction consistently emerges as a key predictor of job satisfaction (Lim et al., 2021; Sulaiman et al., 2020). The findings is also aligned with the results of the study of Kaur et al. (2015) and Lee et al. (2017). According to them, the unique aspects of seafaring, including travel opportunities and exposure to diverse cultures, are found to be positive influencers on job satisfaction. The results are also consistent with the findings that seafarers who perceive clear career progression opportunities tend to be more satisfied with their jobs based on the studies of Hsu & Hung (2011) and Sulaiman et al. (2020).

However, the findings regarding ongoing training and skills development deviate from some studies which found positive correlations (Choi et al., 2019; Hsu & Hung, 2011).

These findings highlight the importance of a holistic approach to enhancing job satisfaction among seafarers. Addressing personal development needs, creating a fulfilling work environment, and providing competitive compensation and benefits can improve individual well-being, attract and retain talent, and contribute to a thriving maritime industry. Table 8 displays the results.

Table 8: Relationship Between Seafarers’ Opportunities and Job Satisfaction.

	Job Satisfaction	
	R	Sig
1. Higher Wages	.428**	.000
2. Better Benefits	.400**	.000
3. Opportunities for Quick Advancement	.274*	.008
4. Work with a diverse range of people	.252*	.015
5. Travel Opportunities	.339*	.001
6. Adventure	.317*	.002
7. Medical Benefits	.339*	.001
8. Ongoing Training and Skills Development	.183	.080
9. Developing Strong Character	.497**	.000

*p < .05, **p < .000

Source: Authors.

Current welfare programs may offer basic support, but they often lack the depth and customization needed to address the diverse needs of individual seafarers. Enhanced programs must focus on building resilience through psychological support, physical well-being initiatives, communication and connection, and skill development and career growth. Developing an enhanced welfare program that specifically targets job satisfaction is a strategic investment in the economic competitiveness and operational efficiency of the maritime industry. By prioritizing seafarer satisfaction, both employers and policymakers can build a more resilient and prosperous maritime sector for the future. Based on the findings, there is a need to develop an enhanced welfare program for seafarers to provide them varied opportunities and enhance job satisfaction.

Conclusions and Recommendations.

Conclusion.

From the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Seafarers placed high value on diverse port visits, cultural exposure, and exploration. They value continuous learning and skill development. Comprehensive healthcare coverage, including mental health services, is essential for seafarers. There is a need to address the diverse needs and preferences of seafarers across age groups, ranks, and experience levels to attract and retain talent, promote career development, and ultimately contribute to a more fulfilling and sustainable maritime workforce.
2. Across demographics and experience levels, seafarers demonstrate overall fulfillment with their work. Intrinsic rewards and the unique nature of seafaring hold appeal regardless of individual backgrounds, highlighting the profession's potential for fulfilling careers.
3. It can be concluded that ensuring competitive compensation, investing in personal development opportunities, and fostering a diverse and inclusive environment, can empower seafarers to navigate their careers with greater fulfillment.
4. Factors like higher wages, comprehensive benefits, travel opportunities, and diverse work environments emerge as significant contributors to seafarer job satisfaction.

Recommendation.

In light of the findings and results of the study, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Maritime school administrators can create a supportive and educational environment that prepares future seafarers for success not only in their careers but also in maintaining their well-being and navigating the challenges of their unique profession.
2. Curriculum planners are encouraged to establish strong partnerships with Maritime Companies. Collaborate with companies to obtain feedback on maritime curriculum effectiveness.
3. It is recommended that Philippine Overseas Shipping Enterprise to develop career development programs and offer guidance, skill development opportunities, and advancement pathways to motivate and retain skilled seafarers, fostering long-term commitment to the seafaring industry.
4. MARINA is encouraged to continuously review and update existing regulations. It is suggested to analyze current regulations on working conditions, safety standards, and mental health support, ensuring they meet international standards and widen opportunities.
5. An enhanced welfare program for seafarers is recommended to help them cope with the risks they encounter in their work and further enhance their job satisfaction.

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